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SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST FABRICATED STORY, ACCORDING TO SALAH AD DIN GOVERNOR

1. This is a SET Tikrit telegram.

SUMMARY

2. A January 12 Washington Post news article describes the Iraqi presidential palaces in Tikrit, formally known as FOB Danger. The article claims to quote the Salah Ad Din provincial Governor as accusing his deputy and the ISF of looting the palace. The Governor disputes the story, saying he did not speak to the Washington Post, nor accuse his deputy of looting. As of December 21, when rumors of massive looting were flying, SET officer found only relatively minor looting in palaces handed over to Iraqi control.

NEWS ARTICLE

3. In a letter to the Al Sabah newspaper, Salah Ad Din Governor Sheik Hamed Shukti disputed the January 12 Washington Post article entitled "After Handover, Hussein Palaces Looted." On January 14, Al Sabah printed a translation of the article.

4. Governor Hamad said he did not give an interview to the Washington Post; however the article states it is quoting him directly from a telephone call. The article quotes the Governor as saying that Iraqi soldiers and even his own deputy were responsible for looting the presidential palaces in Tikrit, just after the handover from U.S. to Iraqi control.

5. The Governor said he would not use a foreign newspaper to criticize the ISF or the Deputy Governor, BGen Abdullah Jabbari. The Governor accuses the reporter of submitting a "fake article" trying to show his neutrality while not having the full story. The Governor then specifically said the accusations in the story are not true.

COMMENT

6. These accusations were floating around Tikrit in mid-December. SET officer toured the palaces, inside and out, on 21 December to discover the extent of the looting. SET officer found minor incidents of draperies and some furniture missing. He also found a broken door and a few broken windows. The biggest problem was many built-in air conditioners had been stolen, with the wires left dangling. As compared to the rumors, there was very little damage to the facilities. On January 23, the 101 ABN Div also investigated, and found minor damages.

BELL